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SUBJECT: Juba: UNMIS Driver Seriously Injured by UXO

¶1. On August 8, an UNMIS driver from Bangladesh was injured when he stepped on a grenade that UNDSS believes remained from the war. The site of the accident was an open field directly across the road from the John Garang grave site and memorial, just a few hundred yards from the seat of the Government of Southern Sudan. The field had been used as parking for SPLA soldiers that were living in a nearby encampment. It also served as parking for the frequent events at the memorial. No previous injuries from unexploded ordinance (UXO) had occurred in the area.

¶2. The UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) officer investigating the incident reports that the car was parked about 10 yards off the road, and that the grenade was less than a foot from the right rear tire. The driver stepped on the grenade while he was waiting by the car and was blown backward. The explosion also flattened both tires of the car, a Nissan Patrol, and blew out the right-rear window. The Bangladeshi driver will survive, but both of his legs have been amputated and he may lose his left arm. The car remained at the site as a Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) demining team cleared the area.

¶3. The UNDSS officer wondered why neither the SPLA nor any of the demining agencies had identified this site as potentially dangerous considering it was home to a large Sudanese Armed Forces encampment during the war. Other sources note that the area was once cordoned off, but that locals had removed the barriers and markers so they could use the land. The UNDSS officer said that a quick visual inspection of the area during his investigation revealed several other UXOs. He was also surprised that no one had been previously hurt in the field, considering its level of use. He commented that this shows how dangerous an environment Southern Sudan can be and said it was a good reminder why they caution people to not stray too far off the road.

HUME